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Ms. Anderson

Please see attached papers. The Consul General in Chicago has been invited to attend as an observer of the Illinois State legislature hearings on the MacBride Principles. He has asked for guidance from the Department on the issue.

I discussed the invitation with him. He felt that the best option would be for the Vice Consul to attend in his place. He felt that it is important for the Consulate to be represented at the hearing but believes that if he attends then there would be a danger of the Government be seen to take a high profile on the issue.

I agree with the Consul-General's advice and recommend that the Vice Consul attends the hearing.

R. Bassett

Anglo-Irish

September 1987

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Part 8 Records
29/12

Internal Guidelines for Irish diplomatic personnel in
responding to questions on the MacBride Principles

1. The Taoiseach and the Tánaiste have outlined the Government's position on the Principles in, respectively, the September issue of Irish American and in reply to a Dáil P.Q. on 7 May last. Copies of both might be supplied to questioners. It can be emphasised that we see nothing objectionable in the Principles and indeed, as a general statement of concern and dissatisfaction about the continuing unacceptable employment situation in Northern Ireland, they are, as the Taoiseach states in his interview, "totally acceptable".
2. We could then go on to say that we understand fully the concerns which many Irish-Americans have about the historic background to, and continued high-level of, discrimination in Northern Ireland. This is a concern we completely share. The Government, for example, have given top priority to trying to ensure early and effective action on fair employment by the British Government. The mechanisms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement are being used fully and actively for this purpose.
3. The common goal of everyone who cares about fair employment must be to ensure that detailed and comprehensive legislation is enacted and implemented as soon as possible. Such legislation must include both detailed monitoring and, in particular, effective sanctions against employers who fail to implement fair employment practices. We welcome the fact that the British authorities have declared their intention to bring forward comprehensive legislation of this type. There is, however, no room for complacency and we intend to maintain the maximum pressure to ensure that this happens at the earliest possible date.

4. On the specific question of the recently-issued Guide to Effective Practice, we might say that we see this as a step in the right direction. As such, it was welcomed by the Tanaiste. However, as the Guide relies essentially on a voluntary approach, it would be unrealistic to expect that it would by itself bring about significant change in the employment pattern in Northern Ireland. It is essential, therefore, that it be followed up by effective legislative action.

5. If asked about the risk of disinvestment resulting from the MacBride Campaign, we should say that we do not see the incompatibility between the MacBride Principles and the aim of sustaining and increasing U.S. investment in Northern Ireland. No one of good will towards Northern Ireland is calling for disinvestment. The issue is not disinvestment, but is rather to ensure that there is a socially responsible and balanced approach on the part of all investors - both foreign and domestic - in Northern Ireland.

6. Finally, if asked to give voting advice to U.S. legislators on the Principles, we should restrict ourselves to saying that this was an issue on which legislators would have to make up their own minds in the light of all the facts of the situation. We would not consider it appropriate, therefore, to suggest to legislators in the U.S. the position that they should adopt on this issue.

October, 1987.

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